

“Practical Worship Guidelines,” Part 1 - 1 Corinthians 14:1-4 – January 31st, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part one of a new series I've titled, "Practical Worship Guidelines."
- Chapter fourteen is unique in the sense that we're provided with the nuts and bolts of our worship both privately and publically.
- As we'll see, the Apostle Paul is addressing their ignorance as well as their arrogance concerning the use of the spiritual gifts.
- In all fairness to the Corinthians, for all their problems centered around the misuse of the gifts, at least they exercised the gifts.
- In other words, to their credit they were open to the supernatural manifestation of the spiritual gifts within their worship services.
- Perhaps this explains what I'll call bookend verses in 12:31 and 14:1, where Paul says to eagerly desire the gifts vis-à-vis love.

1 Corinthians 12:31 (NIV) — 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NIV) — 1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

- It seems the issue was not chiefly because the Corinthians didn't desire the gifts, rather, it's that they overemphasized the gifts.
- I suppose it could be argued that it's better to err on the side of overemphasizing the gifts as opposed to never using the gifts.
- Every Christian has had a gift deposited into their account, as it were, but has never made a withdrawal so as to put it to use.
- Be that as it may, we still have a problem here that needs to be resolved as it relates to the proper way to exercise these gifts.
- More specifically, the gift of tongues, which seems to have been their primary focus, such that tongues only edifies ones self.
- Enter our text today, where Paul will explain and illustrate why it is that the focus should be on edifying the church over self.

1. Edify the church over self (Verses 1-4)

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. 4 Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

- v1 The Apostle Paul tells them to follow the way of love and to also eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially that of prophecy.
- v2 He explains why saying that speaking in tongues is not to people but God, as no one understands the mysteries they utter.
- v3-4 Thus prophecy speaks to people to strengthen encourage and comfort. Tongues edifies self, prophecy edifies the church.

- It's important to understand that the Apostle Paul is not in any way being dismissive of the gift of tongues. The opposite is true.
- The truth of the matter is the gift of tongues was and still is a dominant gift so much so, Paul says he used it more than anyone.
- The Savior Himself validates the dominance of this gift when He tells the disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel.

Mark 16:15–17 (NIV) — 15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

- Tongues is the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit, whereby one speaks prayer, praise, worship and thanksgiving to God.
- Prophecy conversely, is the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit, whereby one speaks a prophetic word from God to man.
- The reason Paul is delineating between the two is because he wants to clear up the confusion surrounding the gift of tongues.
- Tongues is from man to God whereas prophecy is God through man to man such that it strengthens, encourages and comforts.
- Notice that tongues is for the edification of the one speaking, whereas prophecy is for the edification of the church as a whole.
- With tongues, I'm able to pray to God with words that in the natural I cannot express that which is coming from my hearts cry.

Romans 8:26–27 (NIV) — 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

- Just because someone is abusing the gifts doesn't mean that we shouldn't eagerly desire the gifts, especially that of prophecy.
- That's not to say prophecy is always to be desired over tongues in every case, as it's mostly in the context of a church service.
- This because there are Christians and non-Christians present in a church service, which is something Paul will address later.
- All of this begs the question of why they were speaking in tongues within the church service knowing it would only edify self.
- I'm of the belief that it was because that's all the Corinthian Christians cared about, self. They could care less about others.
- While I realize this may sound like a harsh thing to say, the fact remains that a selfish carnality is the only explanation for this.

- To me, the Christians there in the Corinthian church were self focused, and as such, they only did that which edified themselves.
- Actually, this is exactly why the Apostle Paul is correcting and redirecting them to eagerly desire prophecy to edify the church.
- Tongues may strengthen, encourage and comfort the believer individually, but prophecy will do this for the church, corporately.

- In closing, I think it would behoove every single one of us to ask ourselves the question of whether or not we're self focused.
- As one said, if focus is on self you're depressed, if focus is on others, you're distressed, but if it's on the Lord, you're blessed.
- Lastly, I truly do not believe that it's possible for a believer to overstate the importance of taking ones eyes off of themselves.